

Philosophy of Hip-Hop

An Urban War-zone

Outline prepared and written by:

Dr. Jason J. Campbell:
<http://jasonjcampbell.org/home.php>

Youtube Video Link:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6AAb5PGpuI>

In this discussion I will analyze five aspects of war within an urban setting. They are as follows: (1) the concept of earning stripes, (2) military references [with respect to various branches of the military] (3) direct references to being a soldier, (4) the notion of having to survive the ghetto or having survived the ghetto, (5) and finally direct references to the ghetto in terms of actual war zones, e.g., Gaza, Vietnam, Iraq or Afghanistan.

I. The Concept of Earning Stripes:

As soldiers display their stripes so to has the ghetto incorporated the concept of earning stripes. Stripes can be earned for any number of activities, for bravery, for valor, or for participating in battle. Here are direct references to earning stripes:

1. **Brisco feat. Lil Wayne--In the Hood:** [[play audio](#)] "I **earned stripes I got soldiers** that will flop you for it!"

[Explain]

2. **Julez Santana--This is Me:** [[play audio](#)] "that's just life in the Hood, you earn scars **you earn stripes** in the hood."

[Explain]

3. **O.C.--War Games:** [[play audio](#)] "rap **veteran, earned my stripes, fought wars**, opposing forces, would O.C. take losses?"

[Explain]

4. **Trae feat Bun B--So Gangsta:** [[play audio](#)] "I **earned stripes** and scars in street fights and **wars**."

[Explain]

5. **Young Jeezy feat T.I.--I Got Money:** [[play audio](#)] "good morning **Vietnam** yeah **we trying to earn stripes** get jammed up with one it can cost you your whole life."

[Explain]

6. **Young Jeezy--Soul Survivor:** [[play audio](#)] "**and if the hood was a battlefield then I earned stripes**."

[Explain]

II. Military References:

Lyricists will conceptualize their participation in urban warfare by referencing various branches of the armed services. Here are direct military references:

1. **B.G.--Cash Money Is a Army:** [[play audio](#)] "cash money is an **Army** nigga, a **Navy** nigga."

[Explain]

2. **Jim Jones--Going in for the Kill:** [[play audio](#)] "**we trained to kill, Marine Corps** special ops."

[Explain]

3. **Lil Wayne--Army Gunz:** [[play audio](#)] "yeah, yeah, yeah, I got **Army** gunz! yeah, yeah, yeah I got Army gunz! yeah"

[Explain]

III. Direct References to Being a Soldier:

lyricists will conceive of themselves and members of the community as soldiers, i.e., actively participating in an act of war. Here are direct references to being a soldier:

1. **C-Murder--We Soldiers:** [[play audio](#)] "soldiers! Soldiers! Soldiers! I'm a soldier! We soldiers!"

[Explain]

2. **JayZ--A Ballad for the Fallen Soldier:** [[play audio](#)]

"This here's a ballad for all the **fallen soldiers**. I'ma bout 'ta show you how a hustlers life and a soldier's life, **parallel**. And the one thing they got in common, a mother's pain. Picture split screen. On one side **we got a hustler getting ready for the block** (human beings) Other side **you got the soldier getting ready for bootcamp. They're both at war.**"

[Explain]

3. **Maino feat. T-Pain--All the Above:** [[play audio](#)] "I'm a **soldier** a rider **a ghetto survivor**, and all the above."

[Explain]

4. **TRU--No Limit Soldiers:** [[play audio](#)] "cowards despise, **soldiers we ride**, killers with attitude **but ready to die!**"

[Explain]

5. **Tupac--Soldier Like Me:** [[play audio](#)] "**everywhere** I see, a soldier, a soldier, everywhere I see, a soldier like me!"

IV. Surviving the Ghetto:

lyricists understand the nearly insurmountable odds in surviving an urban war zone. Surviving the ghetto becomes one of the greatest ways to earn stripes within an urban culture.

1. Maino feat. T-Pain--All the Above: [[play audio](#)] "I'm a **soldier** a rider a **ghetto survivor**, and all the above."

[Explain]

2. Birdman feat. Magnolia Chop--Out the Ghetto: [[play audio](#)] "You can take a nigga out the ghetto, but you can't take the ghetto outta me, bitch I'm a G, I gotta eat on these streets, **survive on these streets**, I'm a die on these streets, I'm a G."

[Explain]

3. Eric B and Rakim--Casualties of War: [[play audio](#)]

"Casualties of war; as I approach the **barricade**
Where's the **enemy**? Who do I invade?
Bullets of Teflon, bulletproof vest rip
Tear ya outta ya frame with a bag full of clips
Cause I got a family **that waits for my return**
To get back home is my main concern."

[Explain]

4. Ice Cube--Amerikka's Most Wanted: [[play audio](#)] "Back in the day I did my share of dirt. Sometimes I got away clean, sometimes people got hurt But if you know me, you know that I'm liable. To bust a cap cos **it's all about survival of the fittest.**"

[Explain]

5. Kanye West--Jesus Walks: [[play audio](#)] "We at war. We at war with terrorism, racism, **but most of all we at war with ourselves.**"

[Explain]

6. Mobb Deep--Survival of the Fittest: [[play audio](#)] "**there's a war going on** outside, **no man is safe** from. You could run but you can't hide forever."

[Explain]

7. Nas-Rule: [[play audio](#)] "I come from the housin tenement buildings. Unlimited killings, menaces marked for death. **Better known as the projects** where junkies and rock heads dwell. Though I owe to it my success. **With survival of the fittest, everyday is a chal'** (challenge)."

[Explain]

V. The Ghetto as an Active War-Zone:

The levels of inhumanity, brutality, and violence are so high that lyricists often describe their environment in terms of known war zones, emphatically stating that living in the ghetto is similar to living in an active war zone.

1. Young Jeezy feat T.I.--I Got Money: [[play audio](#)] "good morning Vietnam yeah we trying to earn stripes get jammed up of one can cost you your whole life."

[Explain]

2. Mobb Deep--Survival of the Fittest: [[play audio](#)] "my part of town is similar to Vietnam."

[Explain]

3. OJ da Juiceman--Batman: [[play audio](#)] "still in the trap so I'm a plug Afghanistan."

[Explain]

4. Rick Ross feat Meek Mill-Tupac (2pac) Back: [[play audio](#)] "Tupac back, I'm two glocks strapped, rolling down in Philly, this the new Iraq."

[Explain]

5. The Roots -- Long Time: [[play audio](#)] "Just survival kid. And it's a struggle worldwide, I'm positive. Shit the ghetto might as well be the Gaza Strip."

[Explain]

6. Tupac feat. Outlawz--Homeboyz: [[play audio](#)] "Machiavelli the Don, get it called y'all, turning these streets into Vietnam."

[Explain]